

# *The President's Daily Brief*

~~Top Secret~~ 23 October 1967



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DAILY BRIEF  
23 OCTOBER 1967

1. Middle East

Israel is under great pressure to retaliate for the sinking of its destroyer on Saturday. It is already taking a much harsher line against the Arabs.

The Israeli protest lodged with the UN Security Council did not call for an emergency meeting of that body. This could mean that the Israelis plan a counterstrike before the Council can exercise a restraining influence. The next Israeli move, sure to be a carefully calculated one, was almost certainly discussed at yesterday's cabinet meeting.

The Egyptians are bracing for the expected blow

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2. South Vietnam

About 73 percent of the registered voters cast ballots in yesterday's lower house elections. This very satisfying turnout is only about ten percent lower than that recorded in last month's presidential and senatorial voting.

Viet Cong harassment, minimal throughout the country, did not prevent balloting at any polling place.

3. Communist China

Peking has issued a nation-wide directive ordering the immediate reopening of all schools from primary grades through the universities. This is another big step in the push toward moderation and the return of normality.

Order has been re-established in much of the country, though violence still sputters in a few areas. The army appears to be dealing quickly and firmly with those Red Guard extremists who still resist the reining in of the Cultural Revolution.

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**4. Soviet Union**

Moscow has slammed the door on Japanese hopes that it might be willing to talk soon about returning some of the islands seized from Japan at the end of World War II. A Soviet vice foreign minister bluntly told the Japanese ambassador recently that Japanese press speculation on the issue has been wide of the mark, that Moscow regards the islands as Soviet territory and has no intention of giving them back.

**5. Latin America**

Reports are filtering in on the reaction of Latin American radical leftists to "Che" Guevara's death. These reinforce our view that Guevara's fate was the sharpest psychological blow ever suffered by Castro's guerrilla warfare program in the hemisphere. Extremists are disheartened and the Moscow-line parties now have effective new ammunition for arguing against the Castro guerrilla warfare line.

The defeat in Bolivia comes at a time when rebel groups in Venezuela, Colombia, and Guatemala are also suffering reverses at the hands of the military. Nothing we have seen, however, suggests that Castro has any intention of discontinuing his efforts to export revolution.

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**6. South Arabia**

The threat of new violence is rising rapidly.

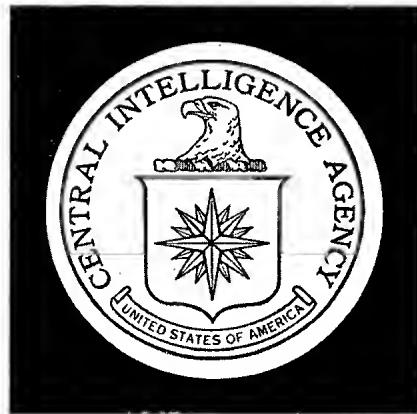
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Much of the tension is being generated by the delay in reaching agreement on a government by the two rival nationalist factions meeting in Cairo. The talks drag on inconclusively as the factions continue jockeying for dominance back home.

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*FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY*

## Special Daily Report on North Vietnam

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I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

Giap on Soviet and Chinese Aid: The determination of the North Vietnamese to remain neutral in the Sino-Soviet dispute is again evident in an article on Soviet and Chinese aid to Vietnam written for the Soviet military newspaper Red Star by Hanoi's Defense Minister Vo Nguyen Giap. The full text of the article is not yet available in Washington, but it appears from the press dispatches and limited Soviet broadcast excerpts that it was written in connection with the upcoming anniversary celebrations of the Soviet revolution.

According to the press, Giap thanked Moscow and Peking equally for their assistance, describing the backing of both as wholehearted. His decision to underscore Hanoi's position on this question may be related to apparent North Vietnamese fears that Sino-Soviet enmity over each other's policy on the war will again break into the open during the Soviet anniversary fetes, thus embarrassing the Vietnamese who would like to see the two powers close ranks on Vietnam.

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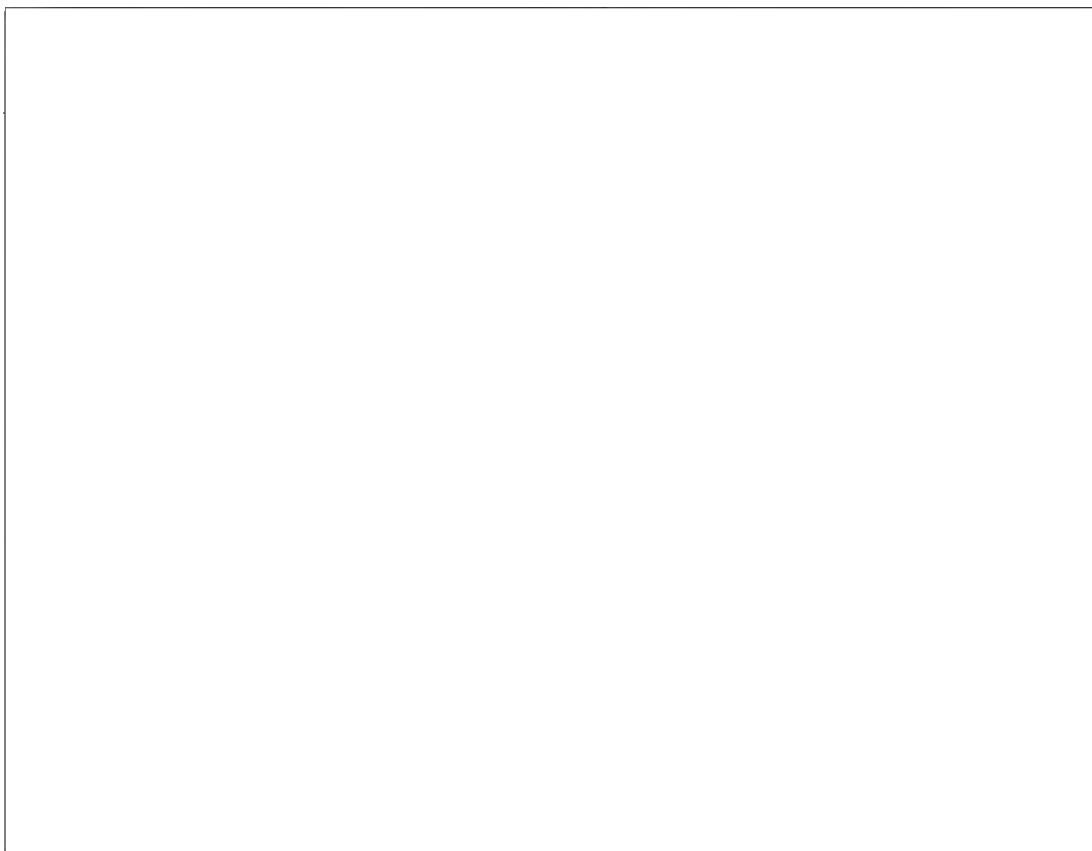
In his Red Star article, Giap made it clear that the Vietnamese regard their war as the central foreign policy issue for the Communist camp at present. "It is through Vietnam," Giap asserted, "that the battlefront of the struggle against aggressive American imperialism...is passing today." This refrain has been a standard theme of the Vietnamese during the past few years in their frequent efforts to enlist more support from the Communist powers.

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Giap claimed that the support so far has reinforced Hanoi's determination to persist in the war and "fulfill" its duty to the socialist camp. As for allied opposition in the war, Giap reiterated his past claims that the bombing has failed and that it cannot stop the North Vietnamese from "supporting their brothers" in the South. This generalized admission of North Vietnamese material backing for the Viet Cong is standard terminology for the North Vietnamese.

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A Soviet News Account of Haiphong Bombing: A Soviet news dispatch goes on at length to describe the "barbaric" US air raids on Haiphong designed to "isolate the city from the rest of the country." He quotes Haiphong city officials as claiming that residential areas, schools, hospitals, industrial enterprises, and transport services have been "wrecked"

by the raids. Transportation is the "main problem," according to the dispatch, and the city is "mobilizing all its forces to solve it." Thanks to this great effort, the report goes on, communication between Haiphong and the rest of the country has never been interrupted.

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A Czech Reporter on Conditions in Hanoi: A Czech news dispatch from Hanoi described the capital as relatively quiet at present, braced for a resumption of US air raids as soon as the weather clears. The Paul Doumer Bridge is described as open to limited traffic. Cars must slow down in places along the bridge where there are "uneven spots" in the road. The dispatch claims that the bridge was repaired with relative speed because the bombing had been foreseen and repair materials had been assembled in the vicinity prior to the bombing.

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Soviet Freighter Captain Claims US Harassment of his Ship: The master of the Soviet freighter Bakuriani, interviewed by an East German reporter in Haiphong, talked of "continuing US provocations" against Soviet merchant vessels in the Tonkin Gulf. He said helicopters of the US Seventh Fleet had circled low over his ship taking photographs and that US warplanes had "constantly" flown over from about 30 miles off Haiphong until the ship reached port.

## II. NORTH VIETNAMESE REFLECTIONS OF US POLITICAL ATTITUDES ON THE WAR

Hanoi on the US Antiwar Demonstrations: North Vietnamese propaganda over the weekend contained a steady flow of material designed to exploit the American antiwar protests. The tone of the commentary was set by a 20 October Hanoi broadcast containing the remarks of Premier Pham Van Dong to a US antiwar group which has been visiting Hanoi. Dong called the American demonstrations part of the "common struggle" by the Vietnamese against US "aggression"

in Vietnam and termed the protesters "comrades in arms" with the Vietnamese.

Although the recent Hanoi commentary on the demonstrations has been plentiful in volume, it has not been phrased in such a way as to suggest that the North Vietnamese are changing their assessment of the effectiveness of the protests. The evidence indicates strongly that they still regard antiwar sentiment in the US as important, but not a determining influence on American policy. US strategy in Vietnam, Hanoi apparently estimates, will continue to be shaped primarily by the development of the military and political situations within South Vietnam and by the balance of forces there between the Communists and the allies.

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